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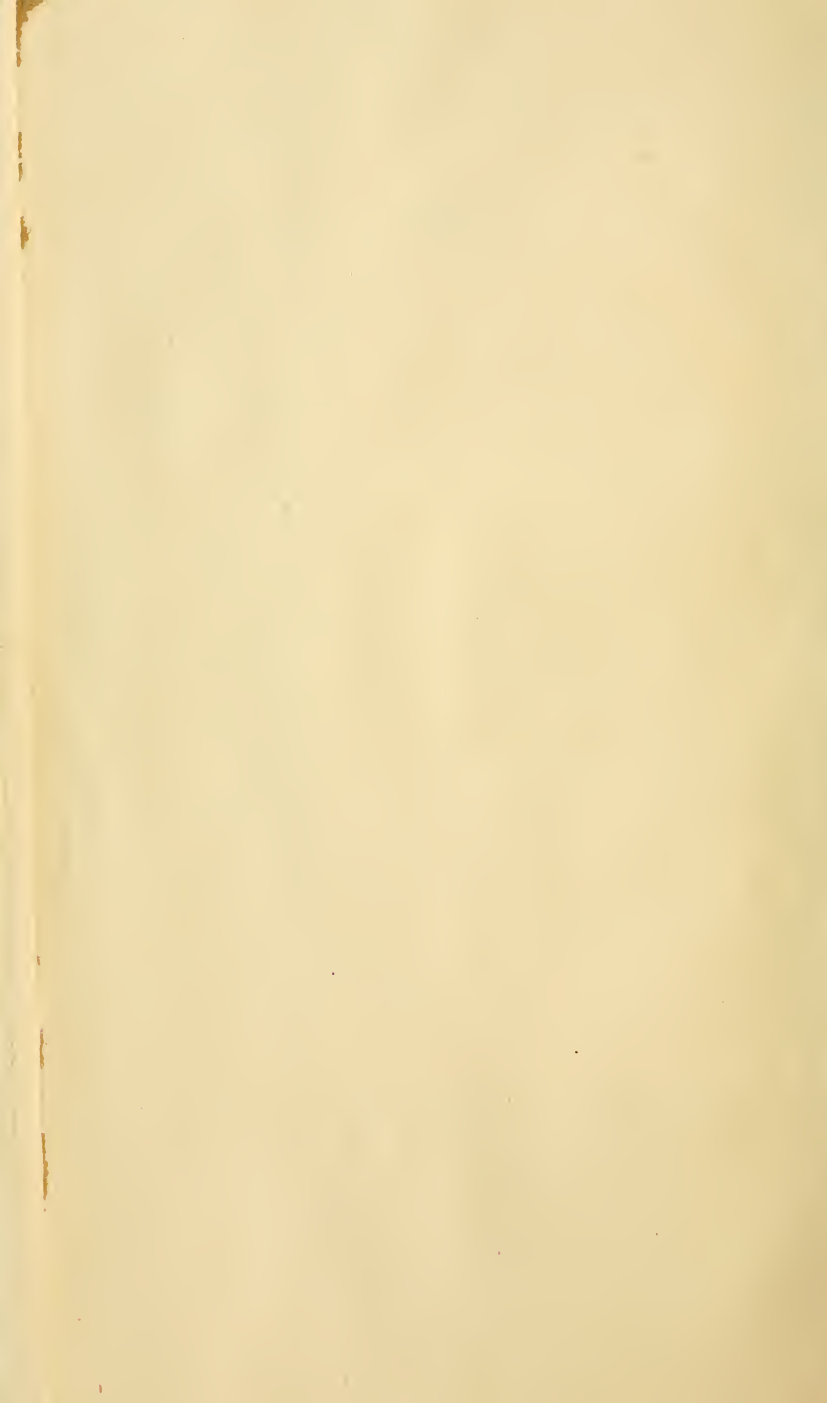
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Book 74



AN ANNUAL

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OF

PENNSYLVANIA,

NOVEMBER 19, 1828.

BY THOMAS MCKEAN PETTIT, ESQ.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY, LEA & CAREY—CHESNUT STREET.

1828.

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At a meeting of "The Historical Society of Pennsylvania," held at Philadelphia, on the 19th day of November, 1828, it was

Resolved, That the thanks of the Society be presented to THOMAS M. PETTIT, Esq. for the interesting and able discourse, delivered by him this evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

From the minutes.

WILLIAM B. DAVIDSON,

Secretary, p. t.



ANNUAL DISCOURSE, &c.

Gentlemen of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania,

THE retrospect of individual life, is enjoined by the precepts of religion, and by the cold calculations of philosophy. While Christianity directs each of us, to look back upon his past career, distinguishing its folly and its wisdom with the keen perceptions of experience, the obvious dictates of mere worldly interest, suggest our future progress from the results of the past. Social communities feel the utility of self-examination, so far as it can be applied to their condition, and upon a still broader scale, nations acknowledge the authority of the same law, in their domestic policy, and practically submit to, and are controlled by it, in their foreign intercourse.

There is something invigorating and grateful in the setting apart of certain periods, for the appropriate acknowledgment of interesting events. Individuals feel an innocent pleasure, in the celebration of their birth-days. Communities derive profit and edification from stated commemorations, whether of well fought battles, won in the cause of liberty, or of powerful displays of generous patriotism, manifested in the civil administration of the state. Nor

is there the less reason to bestow, at regular intervals, a full measure of attention upon those institutions, which, by being devoted to the illustration of our native spot, give to the pride of birth place a new impulse, and to the memory of days gone by, a fresh colouring. Such associations are useful, whether we look to the past or the future. There is a just elation of heart, in regard to the honourable doings of those who have gone before us. The respect, which we feel, for what is praiseworthy in our ancestors, produces an incalculable effect, in exalting the standard of individual excellence, and in raising the tone, and increasing the moral power, of society at large. There is also a deep and a just sense of regret, if not of shame, in the resurvey of the dark pages of the annals of that people, with whom we are most directly connected. Whatever, then, tends to create and to foster the disposition to improve the future, by an accurate view of the past, should be cherished and cultivated, with a vigilance and an activity, commensurate with the highest and the best purposes of man.

In relation to our own political community, individual enterprize, industry, and zeal, would be inadequate to the task of concentrating the scattered details of events of public interest; and associations like that of which we are members, are proved by the concurrent testimony of reason and experience, to be among the most efficacious means of collecting and preserving the materials of history.

The object, therefore, of the founders of the His-

torical Society of Pennsylvania, can be readily perceived, and their design, in directing one of the members to pronounce an occasional public discourse, will be justly appreciated. If in rashly attempting to perform the duty which your kindness has imposed, I shall fail to reach your reasonable expectations, I trust I shall have credit for an honest intent to meet that courtesy, which, by designating me as worthy to make the effort, has foreclosed the best apology I could offer, for declining it.

In selecting a subject, no inconsiderable embarrassment is encountered. If we look for antiquarian details, we find that so much has been beautifully sketched, of the primitive settlements on the Delaware, to gratify and instruct us, that nothing remains for an occasion like this; and if we desire to contemplate the general results of the grand experiment made by William Penn on this side of the Atlantic—if we wish to meditate upon the “moral of the great drama,” we meet with a development so powerful and so eloquent, that presumption itself would not venture to dwell upon the theme again. Nor is the difficulty entirely removed, in the endeavour to fix attention upon some particular branch of Pennsylvanian history. Even here, it is found necessary, to guard against trespassing on ground, which abler hands have skilfully cultivated and improved.

In looking, however, at the enumeration of the objects of the Society, as set forth in the official cir-

cular, issued immediately after its organization, my attention was arrested by the demand for “accounts of universities, colleges, academies, and public schools, their origin and progress,” and I concluded that a brief inquiry concerning the prominent public institutions for the promotion of education in Pennsylvania, would not be without its ultimate use.

It was in the purest spirit that William Penn founded this large empire. He felt deeply and sincerely the truth, which has since been signally and splendidly illustrated in the results of the American revolution, that the happiness of mankind can be secured only under a government acknowledging the broad obligations of justice; and he knew that such a government must be founded on the morality, virtue, energy, and intelligence of the mass of the people. He saw with a penetrating eye, that the governments of Europe were systems, founded for the most part in fraud upon human rights, and sustained by contrivances, calculated to degrade the many for the elevation of the few. Even conscience, whose rights spring directly from heaven, was the insulted object of human coercion. Freedom, civil and religious, was the object of his peculiar affection. But he felt that mankind was spell-bound by imposture and oppression; he knew that the system at home was too inveterate to be disturbed by any effort which he could make, and keeping in advance of that spirit which ere long burst its bonds, and awakening into vigorous action, succeeded in the

indignant overthrow of the British throne, he sought in this western world, to establish a government, in which his principles could be fairly displayed and successfully employed. The charter which he had the address to obtain from his king, gave him a power, which his genius could improve to the foundation of institutions, in their very elements, disclaiming the badges, and defying the bonds of slavery. That charter was a royal one, and bound him to his sovereign; but with regard to others, it left him the full authority to settle new ties, and new obligations; he created them with the natives of the soil, and justice, tempered by mercy, presided over the beautiful work; he established them with the first settlers, and the brightest success crowned his glorious labours.

In "the laws agreed upon in England," in "the conditions and concessions" of 1681, in the first frame of government, and in the "great law," a spirit of enlightened jurisprudence was manifested, infinitely superior to any of the lights of the philosophy of the next half century. Even the best of the boasted doctrines of Beccaria, are to be found as proclaimed, at Upland, by the assembly of Pennsylvania, in the language of William Penn, so early as 1682.

Upon a foundation thus broad, firm and enduring, was based the superstructure of Pennsylvanian greatness. Whether all has been done, which ought to have been done, in rearing the edifice, is a question of deep and serious import. It is our task,

at this time, to examine a particular branch of the work.

In the earliest periods, the doctrine inculcated, was such as to impress parents with the necessity of instructing their offspring, in whatever was of immediate concern; thus in 1682, it was declared as a fundamental law, “that all children within
“the province, of the age of twelve years, should
“be taught some useful trade or skill, to the end
“none may be idle, but the poor may work to live,
“and the rich, if they become poor, may not
“want;”* and with a more direct view to literary instruction, it was provided—

“That the governor and provincial councils
“shall erect and order all public schools, and encourage and reward the authors of useful sciences
“and laudable inventions.”†

The public authorities seem to have been left free to act upon the subject, according to their views of propriety from time to time, guided by the general principles of our first institutions, until the constitution of the commonwealth adopted in September, 1776, provided as follows, viz.—

CHAP. 2, SECT. 44. “A school or schools
“shall be established in each county by the legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth,
“with such salaries to the masters, paid by the
“public, as may enable them to instruct youth at

* Laws agreed upon in England.

† First frame of government.

“low prices; and all useful learning shall be duly
“encouraged and promoted in one or more univer-
“sities.”

The spirit of this provision was transferred to the constitution of 1790, under which we now live, in the following words, viz.:

ART. 8, SECT. 1. “The legislature shall, as soon
“as conveniently may be, provide by law for the es-
“tablishment of schools throughout the state, in
“such manner that the poor may be taught *gratis*.”

SECT. 2. “The arts and sciences shall be pro-
“moted in one or more seminaries of learning.”

In pursuing the inquiry, our attention will in the first place be occupied with the subject of universities.

It is proper to premise that the first charter granted in Pennsylvania for literary purposes, was given in 1697, to a body of trustees at Philadelphia, who were supplied with funds by the Society of Friends, out of its public property.* A school was in a few years opened, for teaching the Latin language, the inferior branches of mathematics, and the rudiments

* Proud, in his History, Vol. I. page 343, says. “The year 1689 gave rise to the Friends’ public school in Philadelphia; which afterwards, in the year 1697, upon the petition of Samuel Carpenter, Edward Shippen, Anthony Morris, James Fox, David Lloyd, William Southby, and John Jones, in behalf of themselves and others, to Deputy Markham, was first incorporated by charter.” This was confirmed by a fresh patent from William Penn, in 1701, and by another in 1708. The last and present charter is dated 29th November, 1711.

of English literature.* That it was well established, is evident from the fact, that, under the protection of the same society, it has continued without interruption, to the present day, to flourish in usefulness and respectability. For many years, the best education which Pennsylvania could furnish, was to be obtained in this seminary, and it was not until half a century had elapsed, that any considerable effort was made to meet the growing wants of the community. The happiness of the early settlers insured the rapid increase of population. Industry and good moral habits, brought wealth and general improvement, and the necessity for men of higher education, in the learned professions, and in the public employments, became too striking to escape observation. So strong, indeed, became the conviction of the leading men of the day, that the existing means were inadequate to meet the demand for education, that in communicating their views to the public, they declared that the community was in danger, "not only of wanting a succession of fit persons for the public stations of life, but even of degenerating into the greatest ignorance."

At this time it was the good fortune of Pennsylvania, that the sun of Franklin's genius was breaking through the clouds, in which its early career had been enveloped. At the suggestion,† and un-

* Wood's Address to the Philomathean Society.

† About this period, Dr. Franklin wrote and published a pamphlet, entitled, "Proposals relating to the Education of

der the direction of that great man, an association was formed, in 1749, with the title of "The Trustees of the Academy of Philadelphia."* In 1750, an English, Latin, and mathematical school was opened. Charity schools were soon added. Though individual liberality and enterprise were devoted to the work, yet it was soon deemed advisable, to apply to the "Proprietaries of Pennsylvania," for the charter of incorporation, which was obtained in 1753. In 1755, a new charter was granted, enlarging the capacity and extending the character of the institution, and, with the power of conferring the usual degrees, giving it the name, style, and title of "The Trustees of the College, Academy, and Charitable School of Philadelphia."

This organization continued for more than twenty years, when it received a portion of the shock, which convulsed the country. The difficulties in the col-

"Youth in Pennsylvania." In his memoirs, he says, "In the introduction to these proposals, I stated their publication not as an act of mine, but of some *public-spirited gentlemen*; avoiding as much as I could, according to my usual rule, the presenting myself to the public as the author of any scheme for their benefit." page 124.

* The trustees were James Logan, Thomas Lawrence, William Allen, John Inglis, Tench Francis, William Masters, Lloyd Zachary, Samuel M'Call, Jr. Joseph Turner, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Leech, William Shippen, Robert Stretzell, Philip Syng, Charles Willing, Phineas Bond, Richard Peters, Abraham Taylor, Thomas Bond, Thomas Hopkinson, William Plumstead, Joshua Maddox, Thomas White, and William Coleman.

lege, which grew out of the state of public feeling, belong, more properly, to the political history of the times, than to the history of a literary institution, strictly as such, but, inasmuch as, for a while, they seriously affected the cause of learning, a brief notice of them may not be out of place. Nothing appears in the statute book upon the subject, till the passage of the act of 27th November, 1779,* which exhibits on its face, very distinctly, the sensitiveness of feeling, and the jealousy of opinion, which marked the period. It is entitled, “An act to confirm the estates and interests of the College, Academy, and Charitable School of the City of Philadelphia, and to amend and alter the charters thereof, conformably to the revolution, and to the constitution and government of this commonwealth, and to erect the same into an university.”

The preamble set forth, that—

“Whereas the education of youth has ever been found to be of the most essential consequence, as well to the good government of states, and the peace and welfare of society, as to the profit and ornament of individuals, insomuch, that from the experience of all ages, it appears that seminaries of learning, when properly conducted, have been public blessings to mankind, and that, on the contrary, when in the hands of *dangerous* and *disaffected* men, they have troubled the peace of society, shaken the government, and often caused

* 1 Dall. State Laws, 815.

“tumult, sedition, and bloodshed;” “And whereas
“the college, academy, and charitable school, were
“at first founded on a plan of free and unlimited
“catholicism, but it appears that the trustees, by a
“vote or bye-law of their board, bearing date the
“14th day of June, A. D. 1764, have departed from
“the plan of the original founders, and narrowed
“the foundation of the said institution.”

“Be it enacted,” and so forth.

The law proceeded not merely to make null and void the offensive vote of the trustees, but while, in express language, it confirmed the original charters to the seminary, it “dissolved and vacated” the board of trustees, and the faculty, designated a new board of trustees, under the name of “The Trustees of the University of the state of Pennsylvania,” and vested all the authorities and estates of the trustees appointed in pursuance of the former charters, in the new board, for the use of the university forever. And in order to create a certain fund for the institution, it made it lawful for the supreme executive council, to reserve so much of the confiscated estates, as would amount to the yearly income of 1500 pounds. It also, of necessity, abrogated the former oath or affirmation of allegiance, and transferred it to the commonwealth.*

No one, who had read the constitution of 1776, which provided that all bodies of men, incorporated

* Act of 22d September, 1785, gave a legislative confirmation to the reservations made under this act.

for the advancement of learning, should be protected in the enjoyment of their privileges and estates, could pause to reflect here, without being struck with the boldness of the spirit which dictated this law. And the legislative records abundantly prove, that after the storm of war had subsided, whatever in this, as in other establishments, had partaken of its violence, was submitted to the correction, of the mild and genial influences of order and peace.

Accordingly, on the 6th March, 1789,* an act was passed, which, in its preamble, declared that the trustees and other officers of the college, academy, and charity school, had been “without trial “by jury, legal process, or proof of misuser or forfeiture,” deprived of their charters, franchises, and estates, and denounced the said act of 1779, as “repugnant to justice, a violation of the constitution of “this commonwealth, and dangerous in its precedent “to all incorporated bodies,” and, in its enactments, repealed so much of it, as touched, or, in anywise, concerned, the ancient corporation, or either of the former charters, revived the powers of the said ancient corporation, and authorised them to recover their estates.

The university retaining its charter, two institutions, with the same general object, thus existed in a community, which could not do more than give efficient encouragement to one ; and something yet remained to be accomplished, in order to protect the

* 2 Dall. State Laws, 650.

cause of learning, and the reputation of the state, from the effects of the feebleness, which was obviously occasioned by this division of force. In less than three years, therefore, both parties acknowledged the necessity of a harmonious concert of action, and on the 30th September, 1791,* a law was passed, to unite the university and the college.

It was founded upon the several petitions of the respective boards of trustees, proposing terms of union, and enacted, that each board should elect twelve trustees, and that the twenty-four thus nominated, with the governor of the state, should be a corporation, under the name of "The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania," declared that the university should be always stationed at Philadelphia, vested all the estates of the former corporations, in the new one, and authorised it to do every thing needful and necessary for the establishment of an university, and to constitute a faculty to consist of the proper number of professors in the arts and sciences, and in law, medicine, and divinity. Under this law, the university exists at the present day.

Having completed this review of what appears on the statute book, it may be proper to look back, for a moment, for what was actually done, all the while, for the cause of learning. The best accounts of the establishment show, that under the organization of 1755, the college was supplied with professors of the highest reputation and ability, and

* 3 Dall. State Laws, 160.

received very liberal contributions in money, from its friends here, and in England. It flourished, as one of the very best seminaries in the colonies. It has been remarked in an excellent publication,* that “such was the confidence inspired by the regulations and management of the college, that a gentleman of considerable celebrity, born and educated in England, declared, in a letter to a friend, that, for the primary education of his own children, he should prefer the school of Philadelphia, not only to any other in the provinces, but even to his favourite Oxford.”

The breaking out of the war of independence, of course, interrupted its prosperity; and the high-handed enactment of 1779, was not calculated to restore its wonted standing. Under the arrangements of 1791, the institution has been divided, practically, into two departments, one of medicine, and the other of the arts. It is not within the scope of my purpose, to trace out the history of either of these; but it can be remarked, as a source of pride to our city, our state, and our country, that a medical school has been established, which has deservedly reached a splendid eminence, that makes it in point of usefulness, without a rival, and places its reputation, above the effects of praise. In the collegiate department, the degree of success which has attended the exertions of the different professors, certainly, has not been equal to the ability, faithfully applied. Recent improvements, however, by en-

* Wood's Address to the Philomathean Society.

larging the period, and settling the course of study, and securing the requisite ability and character in the new faculty, afford a foundation for the hope, that the honours of this department will hereafter be sought for, and valued, with an interest, commensurate with the high talent and deep learning engaged, and corresponding with the other excellent means, which a large revenue furnishes, and with the lofty views and purposes of the trustees.

So much for the only university, in actual operation, in the commonwealth. It is to be observed, however, that in 1819, the legislature authorised the establishment of an university, in the county of Allegheny, to be called “The Western University of Pennsylvania,”* and granted, for its use, some vacant land in the same county. A prior, unextinguished right of common in the land, being interposed, the object of the law was suspended for some years. In 1826, however, the legislature appro-

* The original board of trustees, surrendered their rights, “by reason of several of them not residing convenient to “their usual place of meeting,” and the legislature, by the act of 1826, appointed a new board, as follows; Joseph Stockton, Joseph Kerr, Hugh Davis, William Robison, Jr. John Irwin, and James R. Butler, of the town of Allegheny, and Francis Herron, Benjamin Bakewell, Henry Baldwin, William Wilkins, Charles Shaler, Walter Forward, Matthew B. Lowrie, Alexander Johnson, Jr. John S. Riddle, Harmar Denny, Charles Avery, Peter Mowry, Ephraim Pentland, John M. Snowden, Alexander Brackenridge, William M'Candless, Joseph P. Gazzam, Robert Patterson, John Darragh, William Hays, Richard Biddle, John M'Donald, Thomas Enoch, and James S. Stevenson, of the city of Pittsburgh, and James C. Gilleland, and John Brown, of the County of Allegheny.

priated to the trustees, the sum of two thousand four hundred dollars per year, for five years, and authorised the erection of the buildings in Pittsburgh, or in that vicinity. The trustees have proceeded, with much vigour, towards the accomplishment of the original design. An elegant and extensive building is nearly finished, and will, it is understood, ere long, be opened for the reception of students.

2. We are now brought to the subject of *Colleges*. After the successful termination of the revolutionary contest, the interior of the state increased so much in population and importance, that the citizens, relieved from the burthens of war, not only found themselves in a condition, to attend to the useful arts, sciences, and literature, but felt the necessity of some exertion, to promote and encourage them. Accordingly, in 1783,* an act of the legislature was procured, for the establishment of a college at Carlisle, in the county of Cumberland. The preamble declared, that by the petition of a large number of persons, of established reputation for patriotism, integrity, ability, and humanity, it appeared, that the institution of a college at Carlisle, was likely to promote the real welfare of the state, and especially the *western parts* thereof, and that a large sum of money, sufficient to begin and carry on the design, for some considerable time, was already subscribed. The law proceeded to erect and establish, “a college for the education of youth, in “the learned and foreign languages, the useful

* Act of 9th Sept. 1783. 2 Dall. State Laws, 118.

“arts, sciences, and literature,” and declared, that in memory of the important public services of his excellency, John Dickinson, and in commemoration of his very liberal donation, the institution should be called by the name of “Dickinson College.” Trustees were named, consisting of some of the most distinguished men residing in this city, and in different counties of the state.* The necessary power was given, of appointing a Faculty, who should

* The first trustees were as follows:—

His Excellency, John Dickinson, Esquire, President of the Supreme Executive Council, Henry Hill, James Wilson, and William Bingham, Esquires, and Dr. Benjamin Rush, of the city and county of Philadelphia; the Rev. James Boyd, of the county of Bucks; Dr. John M'Dowell, of the county of Chester; the Rev. Messrs. Henry Muhlenberg, A. M. and William Handell and James Jacks, Esquires, of the county of Lancaster; the Rev. Messrs. John Black, Alexander Dobbins, John M'Knight, the honourable James Ewing, Esquire, Vice President of the Supreme Executive Council, and Robert M'Pherson, Henry Schlegle, Thomas Hartley, and Michael Hahn, Esquires, of the county of York; the Rev. Messrs. John King, Robert Cooper, James Lang, Samuel Waugh, William Linn, and John Linn, and John Armstrong, John Montgomery, Stephen Duncan, Thomas Smith, and Robert Magaw, Esquires, and Dr. Samuel A. M'Coskrey, of the county of Cumberland; the Rev. Christopher Emanuel Shulze, and Peter Spyker, Esquire, of the county of Berks; John Arndt, of the county of Northampton; William Montgomery and William Maclay, Esquires, of the county of Northumberland; Bernard Dougherty and David Espy, Esquires, of the county of Bedford; the Rev. James Sutton and Alexander M'Clean, Esquire, of the county of Westmoreland; and William M'Cleary, Esquire, of the county of Washington.

have authority, with the consent of the trustees, signified by their mandamus, to confer such degrees in the arts and sciences, as were usually granted in other colleges, in Europe and America.

In little more than two years, we find it asserted upon legislative authority, that, “under care and good “management,” the institution was rapidly growing, and promised to be of great advantage, by largely diffusing the liberal arts, and that the number of pupils was so great, that the infant funds of the establishment were not sufficient to provide them with accommodations. Wherefore, in 1786, a grant to the college, was made by the state, of five hundred pounds in money, and ten thousand acres of unappropriated land, which was followed, in the next two years, by some other endowments. In 1791, the sum of fifteen hundred pounds was appropriated, for the immediate relief of the institution, and the legislature again gave testimony that the college “had been eminently useful in that diffusion “of knowledge, which the constitution of the commonwealth, and the general interest of the citizens require the legislature to promote.”

In 1795, the commonwealth granted five thousand dollars, upon a condition which deserves attention, namely, that there should be admitted into the college any number of students, not exceeding ten, who may be offered, in order to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, *gratis* ; no one of them to continue longer than two years.

From this date, no further legislative grant was

made directly to the college, till the year 1819.* It then appeared, that in consequence of the serious loss of its buildings by fire, a heavy debt had been incurred in 1803, which continued to bear down the institution; and the governor of the commonwealth was authorized to cancel the mortgage given by the trustees to secure the debt, which now amounted to upwards of eight thousand dollars, and thus to assist the college to that extent.

Important benefits have been since conferred. The land before granted, being always unavailable, was, in 1821,† taken in exchange for the sum of six thousand dollars, and the sum of two thousand dollars per year, for five years, appropriated for the support of the institution.

In 1826,‡ some defects were corrected, in the organization of the board of trustees, the recurrence of certain abuses guarded against, and the sum of three thousand dollars per year, granted for seven years, to be applied to the support of the establishment.

Let us now look, for an instant, at the results which these various measures have produced. It would seem, that notwithstanding the seminary sustained its early promise for a considerable time, yet during a course of many years, it gradually languished, under the weight of its debts and difficulties, till 1816, when its operations were entirely suspended. The aid it received in 1819 and 1821,

* Act of 23d March, 1819.

† Act of 20th Feb. 1821.

‡ Act of Feb. 13, 1826.

enabled the trustees to revive its proceedings, and they were peculiarly fortunate in obtaining professors of high reputation and undoubted qualifications. Some of them still continue to adorn their stations in the college, and the successor to the distinguished Dr. Mason, who was compelled, by ill health, to relinquish the chair of "Principal," is acknowledged to have acquired, and to deserve a character, eminently fitting him for the appropriate discharge of his important duties. The course of instruction is understood to be that, which is approved in the colleges of most repute. The edifice is extensive, and contains a good library and philosophical apparatus, and the institution may now be fairly ranked among the best of its kind in our country.

In 1787, an effort was made to establish a college in the borough of Lancaster, designed particularly for our German population. The act of assembly styled it "Franklin College," from a profound respect for the virtues, talents, and services of Benjamin Franklin, and described it as "The German College and Charity School." Some land, and a certain public storehouse were given to it. The land was unproductive, and the funds raised, by private subscription, served but for its organization. After a struggle of two or three years, the undertaking was abandoned.*

* Some of the facts stated in this part of the discourse, are taken from a report made by a committee of the senate in the session of 1821-22.

In coming nearer to our own day for the origin of collegiate establishments, it might be expected that we should cast our eyes still further to the west. Though in 1783, Carlisle may have been considered on our border, yet, in twenty years, the tide of population had extended to the utmost limits of the jurisdiction of the state. Thus, in 1802,* the academy at Canonsburg, afforded a foundation, on which were incorporated twenty-one trustees,† under the style of “The Trustees of Jefferson College in Canonsburg in the county of Washington,” with full power to appoint the proper professors to constitute a faculty, possessing authority, with the approbation of the trustees, to confer such degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, as are usually granted in other colleges in the United States. The charter vested the property of the academy in the trustees of the college, subject to its original uses, one of which was, that a certain number of poor children, should, for a limited time, be taught, *gratis*. In 1806,‡ the legislature granted three thousand dollars to this college, and renewed the

* Act of 15th January, 1802. 6 Bioren, 209.

† The first trustees were as follows, to wit:—Rev. John M'Millan, Joseph Patterson, Thomas Marquis, Samuel Ralston, John Black, James Powers, James Dunlap, and John M'Pharrin;—James Edgar, John M'Dowell, James Allison, William Findley, Craig Ritchie, John Hamilton, Joseph Vance, Robert Mahon, James Kerr, Aaron Lyle, Alexander Cooke, John Mercer, and William Hughes, Esquires.

‡ Act of 1st March, 1806.

obligation to teach, gratis, for a limited time, a certain number of poor children. In 1821,* the commonwealth granted one thousand dollars per year, for five years; and in 1826,† the like sum yearly, for four years.

This institution, availing itself of a considerable bequest for the purpose, has been instrumental, in educating a respectable number of poor but pious young men for the gospel ministry. The college edifice is substantial and commodious, and contains a useful philosophical, and chemical apparatus. It is understood, that within a few years, this seminary has increased in reputation and in usefulness, and that it promises to continue to flourish.

About the year 1823-4, an effort was made to widen the sphere of its authority, by establishing at Philadelphia, a department, in which the customary branches of medical education could be taught. The plan was sanctioned by the legislature, who, in 1826, authorized the trustees at Canonsburg, to elect ten additional trustees, residing in the city or county of Philadelphia, as a committee to superintend the medical department giving instruction at Philadelphia, with such powers as to commencements and conferring degrees, as the board at Canonsburg might direct, prescribing a full course of study, and regulating the fees for the lectures. Under this act, the medical school commenced its operations. It is to be sincerely de-

* Act of 15th Feb. 1821.

† Act of 11th March, 1826.

sired, that it may reach an eminence creditable to itself, and worthy of the cause of science.

It might have been believed, that one college in the western counties, would have answered every good purpose, in promoting the growth of useful knowledge. Neither the requisite learning and accomplishments in the professors, nor the indispensable support in funds, can be procured, where injudicious opposition is permitted, in regard to the business of teaching the liberal arts and sciences. But these views seem not to have had their just influence here. Before 1806, an academy at Washington, in the county of that name, had been an object of legislative care, and had grown into credit. Upon this basis the legislature were induced in that year,* to establish the "Washington College." The charter gave authority to the trustees and faculty, similar to that originally granted in the case of Jefferson College, and also transferred to the college the property of the academy. By the acts of 1821 and 1826, the sum of one thousand dollars per year, was granted by the state, for nine years. This institution has excellent buildings, and some philosophical apparatus. For many years, it was regarded as prosperous and useful, but recent information exhibits it as on the decline.

The north-western quarter of our state, also claimed and received the attention of the legislature, and, in 1817, a charter was granted to "Allegheny

* Act of 8th March, 1806. 8 Bioren, 126.

College," located at Meadville, in Crawford county. The sum of two thousand dollars was given with the charter, and in 1821, one thousand dollars per year, for five years, was bestowed. The Rev. William Bentley, D. D. of Salem, Massachusetts, bequeathed to this institution, many years ago, a very respectable library, and a handsome sum of money. Judge Winthrop, of Massachusetts, also bequeathed to it, an extensive library of rare and valuable books. Considerable individual exertion was industriously made, in behalf of the college, but I have not learned, that it has yet realized the sanguine anticipations of its early friends.

On the 9th of March, 1826, an act was passed "for the establishment of a college at Easton, in the county of Northampton." The style of "Lafayette College" was selected "in memory, and out of respect for the signal services rendered by General Lafayette, in the great cause of freedom." The objects of the charter are more comprehensive than those of colleges in general, and are declared to embrace, "the education of youth in the various branches of science and literature, the useful arts, military science, tactics, and engineering, and the learned and foreign languages." Some measures were taken, under the charter, by collecting contributions, &c.; but the establishment has not yet been sufficiently advanced for the reception of students.

By an act of the 7th of March, 1827, "Madison College" was established at Uniontown, in the

county of Lafayette, with a charter, conferring the usual powers, and especially authorising an additional "department of agriculture, in which shall "be taught scientifically, the arts and uses of all "and every kind of husbandry." The property belonging to the Union Academy, was, by the same act of assembly, vested in the trustees of the college, subject to its original uses; and upon this foundation, the college has been duly organized, with a faculty consisting of three professors. There are about forty students in the collegiate department, and a somewhat larger number in the inferior schools.

3. The next division of our inquiry comprehends "Academies." It would be a task more laborious than profitable, to make a detailed enumeration, even of those, which are mentioned in the laws. Nor would it be possible to procure facts, upon which an opinion could be formed, as to their respective characters. A legislative report,* exhibits a list of such as were incorporated, within the state, between the years 1783 and 1822, and furnishes the names of fifty-six. It is shown, that the state had appropriated to them different sums, in different years, to the amount of seventy-three thousand dollars in money, besides large grants of land, of the value of which no estimate can be readily made. Since 1822, many others have been incorporated, and considerable grants made by the legislature. Some of the long

* Report of committee of Senate, 1822.

list, have, undoubtedly, succeeded in answering the end designed, while it is to be acknowledged, that a large portion of them cannot be pronounced in a prosperous condition. Accurate information upon this topic, is, perhaps, of the less importance, because the fact is not to be overlooked, that there are, in the state, numerous unincorporated institutions, devoted to the instruction of youth, in science and literature, in which teachers of great merit and reputation, are constantly and successfully employed.

4. We have, thus far, fixed our attention upon institutions, designed for the instruction of the youth of parents, who are able to pay for the education of their offspring, and it remains, to exhibit what has been accomplished, in obedience to the constitutional injunction, for the establishment of schools, in such manner, that the poor may be taught, *gratis*. It has been already remarked, that some of the colleges are obliged to instruct, without pecuniary recompense, a limited number of pupils, and it is to be further observed, that many of the legislative grants to the different academies, had annexed to them, a condition, that certain numbers of poor children, should be taught, free of expense. Until 1809, this insufficient method, seems to have been the only one employed, to carry into effect a wholesome fundamental principle. The act of 4th April, 1809,* was intended to provide a general system. It makes it

* 5 Smith, 73.

the duty of the different assessors, to report to the county commissioners, the names of all children, between the ages of five and twelve years, in their respective districts, whose parents are unable to pay for their schooling. The parents are then *at liberty*, to send their children to the most convenient schools, and the masters are to present their bills, under oath or affirmation, to the commissioners, for the tuition of such as are entered.

The only other law, designed “to lay the foundation of a general system of education throughout the commonwealth,” was passed on 24th March, 1824. Its object was twofold. In the first place, to secure the assistance of a body of “schoolmen,” to stand between the poor children and the public purse, with powers of visitation and inspection, and of general superintendence; and in the next place, to submit to the decision of the people, at their election of schoolmen, a proposition for the annual assessment of a general tax upon all taxable property, for the support of schools;—and to authorise the schoolmen, under this arrangement, to cause to be erected school-houses, to appoint teachers, and to have a general control over the subject. The first of these enactments was excellent, as far as it went, and the second was entitled to much more consideration, than it ever received. Philadelphia and Lancaster were exempted from the provisions of the law; and so little support and encouragement did it obtain throughout the state, that in 1826, it was repealed, and former enactments revived. As to a general

plan, therefore, it is to be regretted, but it cannot be denied, that much remains to be achieved. In Cumberland and Dauphin counties, certain improvements were authorised by a special law.* But it is in Philadelphia and Lancaster, that some redeeming exertions are to be hailed and admired.

About the year 1817, the attention of a number of public-spirited citizens,† in this quarter, was seriously aroused to the importance and utility of an extensive diffusion of intelligence. They believed that the theories of false philosophy, and the practices of despotic power, had to a very great extent yielded to the influence of reason and the efforts of virtue; and it was soon discovered by the scrutinizing eyes of these political economists, that, in particular districts, where the density of population produced the habits which ordinarily proceed from mixed associations, and gave peculiar encouragement to the vicious inclinations and depraved courses of youth, something more efficacious than any system hitherto pursued, was rendered indis-

* Act of 27th March, 1821.

† The following named gentlemen composed the Committee on Public Schools, who investigated, and reported on the utility of the system of free public instruction, and proposed the present valuable plan; viz. Roberts Vaux, Chairman, Jonah Thompson, Ebenezer Ferguson, John Claxton, John Robbins, Joseph M. Paul, Samuel B. Morris, William Fry, Rev. P. F. Mayer, Joseph Rotch, Thomas F. Leaming, and Joseph R. Paxson.—Vide Pamphlet Reports of Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Economy, 1817.

pensable, to the due organization, and general welfare of the community. It was under the influence of such sentiments, that on the 3d of March, 1818, a law was passed, providing for a new and improved plan of public instruction in the city and county of Philadelphia.

The act designates the city and county as the first school district of the state, divides the district into different sections, provides for a board of directors in each section, and for a general board of controllers, directs the institution of a sufficient number of schools, and declares, that the principles of Lancaster's system of education should be adopted and pursued, excepting in certain specified country sections, in which it was thought, from the comparative thinness of the population, that the plan might be inconvenient. The different local authorities immediately proceeded to the appointment of the directors; and the controllers, selected from the directors, in the proportion of one to six, entered upon the discharge of their duties.

By virtue of the powers conferred, schools were at once established. Joseph Lancaster, the author of the celebrated system, had recently arrived in Philadelphia, and the controllers availed themselves of his services, in the original organization. The teachers, thus, had an opportunity of obtaining a correct knowledge of the plan, in its objects, principles, and practical details.

Upwards of twenty-nine thousand pupils have been taught, at an expense not exceeding four dol-

lars per annum, for each child. A comparison with the former accounts, exhibits a vast improvement in the application of the public money, and in the nature and efficiency of the instruction afforded. Under the old plan, the most shameful abuses of the public bounty existed; abuses, too, which the county officers, with the best dispositions, had it not in their power to remedy, in an effectual manner. In one of the sections, where a minute examination was made, not thirty, out of three hundred children paid for by the county, were found in the schools to which they had been sent. The law made no provision for any examination of the schools, and from the variety and character of the duties of the commissioners, it was impossible for them to exercise any particular supervision. The plan was highly expensive for the public, entirely inefficacious for the children, and profitable only for the teachers. On the other hand, from the nature of the board of control, and the different boards of directors, a minute superintendence over each school, is exercised by men of the most respectable character, who are clothed with sufficient power, to exact from pupils and teachers, that course of conduct which is necessary to the due execution of the law, under which, the whole plan operates. These gentlemen are appointed at stated periods, and the security for the faithful performance of their trust, is to be found in their sense of public duty, and public responsibility.

Every one, who has visited a Lancasterian school,

or who has inquired into the principles of the system, knows, that what is taught, is taught thoroughly, and that the discipline under which the pupils act, is admirably calculated to fix upon them, such habits of attention to whatever they may be engaged in, as cannot fail to be of the highest utility through life. The leading advantages of the system in operation, may be stated to consist, in its great economy, in its causing the largest number of children to be brought to the schools, in its securing, as far as practicable, a regular attendance, and a correct deportment of the scholars, and in its providing an education, plain, but correct, substantial, and really efficient. It ought to be remarked, that it has been fortunate for the system, and for this community, that the zeal and activity of intelligent and high-minded citizens, have been devoted to the management of this branch of the public concerns. And in awarding just praise to them, we do not forget, that the exertions of public-spirited men, at Lancaster, have crowned the work, there, with a similar success.

A detail, like that, which I have thus, plainly and imperfectly, and, I fear, too tediously, presented, may not be without a salutary effect, if it serve to aid in marking out a future course of policy. . An argument in favour of learning, either in the highest branches, or the simplest rudiments, is rendered entirely superfluous, by the authoritative mandate of our constitution, and an investigation and comparison of the different methods of instruction, would not be within the order of this discourse. Upon

this topic, however, the lights are abundant, and no apprehensions need be experienced. College studies have been called "the gymnastics of the intellect," and, as skill and judicious management render productive, the soil, that was before waste and sterile, so do Lancasterian schools nourish and expand the youthful mind.

But, in an adulation of what is admirable in the past, we must not permit ourselves to be hoodwinked, to imperfections or omissions, in legislation, or in practice. For seminaries of the higher order, enough has certainly been done, with respect to mere foundation. Public confidence alone, is wanting, to enable them to accomplish the ends proposed. Let the citizens of Philadelphia and its vicinity, justly appreciate and encourage the great worth of her collegiate department, and it will not fail to draw from other quarters, as its medical associate has drawn, all the aid desired to extend its reputation and its usefulness. Let the people of the middle counties, second, with a becoming energy, the legislature and the faculty, and the honours of Dickinson College, will illuminate our mountains and our valleys. Let the efforts of the west, be concentrated upon that institution, which shall most deserve them, and the Monongahela, and the Allegheny, will water a country, blessed, not less, in the wealth of its inanimate productions, than in the distinction of its learned men. Let all this be done, too, with a view to the cultivation of a Pennsylvania feeling, and a Pennsylvania character: for, in

being true to ourselves, we cannot be false to others. In the result, our state must command that lofty elevation among her sisters of the confederacy, which belongs to her great opportunities, and which can be most appropriately maintained, by a continued supply from her own means, of the highest acquirement and talent, for her own service, and that of our common country.

Touching the great work of the education of the poor, it behoves us to shake off the apathy, which hangs over the largest portion of our people. Let such a spirit be awakened among all classes of men, as will justify and uphold the constituted guardians of the public prosperity, in creating establishments so broad, so comprehensive, and so permanent, that in all time to come, no child shall grow up, uneducated, in our commonwealth. And while directing the necessary attention to this deeply interesting subject, let "Sunday schools," and "Infant schools," as excellent auxiliaries in the general diffusion of useful learning, receive the full measure, of well-earned approbation and encouragement.

All these things are not only practicable, but in looking at what has been achieved, in other departments of government, the character of Pennsylvania, stands pledged for their fulfilment. Religious charity is not only tolerated, but is protected. The rights of property and personal liberty, are secured by the double tie, of wise legislation and general integrity. Human enterprise and skill, are pros-

trating the barriers, and eliciting the wealth of nature. The hills and plains are surrendering their inexhaustible treasures. From Erie to the Delaware, industrious commerce flourishes, by the aid of artificial communication. Throughout our limits, peace and plenty smile upon the land. Shall we then be deficient in a single point? Are we in danger of allowing our very success, to divert our attention, from those literary establishments, and that mental cultivation, which, in ancient and modern times, have marked the real superiority of nations? Shall the wide-spread fame of Pennsylvania, for benevolence, and for the solid basis of her many excellent institutions, sustain a blot, for want of a seasonable improvement of her golden facilities, in regard to general education? It must not be; and in uniting, in one strong determination, to discharge our duty, let us beseech that Almighty being, "who hath made the earth by his power, and established the world by his wisdom," to enlighten, protect, and prosper our commonwealth, so that the learning which purifies, and the arts which embellish, may dwell within her borders, upon a foundation as deep as virtue, as firm as liberty, and as durable as justice.

THE END.

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